

11-25-12

My BNSP Draft and Memos

[Earlier in text: I was spending most of my time in Washington, these first months of the Kennedy administration, as a consultant from RAND, largely working for Paul Nitze, Assistant Secretary of Defense for International Security Affairs, and his Deputy, my friend and former RAND colleague Harry Rowen. My salary came from RAND.

The memos presented verbatim below may or not be included in whole in the text. They could be in an appendix, or put on the web, with footnotes giving links. They were all classified Top Secret when written. Some memos have been partially declassified as a result of FOIA requests from the National Security Archive. Portions initially withheld from declassification are shown here in bold type.]

Meanwhile, during this whole period, I was working on a project Harry Rowen had given me in late February or early March of 1961. He had been asked by his boss, Assistant Secretary Paul Nitze, to draft the Department of

Defense proposal for a new “Basic National Security Policy “ (BNSP), and Harry passed this task to me.

President Eisenhower had initiated this series of annual Top Secret policy documents-- formulated and debated at the NSC level for presidential approval and signature--as the statement by civilian authority of the objectives and guidelines to serve each year as the basis for all war planning within the Department of Defense.

Under Eisenhower each BNSP had embodied the “New Look” and “massive retaliation” doctrines of John Foster Dulles and Chairman of the JCS Arthur W. Radford, emphasizing “main but not sole reliance” upon nuclear weapons rather than “conventional” or non-nuclear weapons. In fact, this emphasis was expressed in a trend by Eisenhower officials toward describing nuclear weapons themselves as “conventional.” Since for some years John Kennedy, as a Senator, had been associated with a critique of “massive retaliation” similar to that of General Taylor and others, and an espousal of what Taylor called the “strategy of flexible response,” it was understood in the Pentagon in early 1961 that a significant change in the policy directives guiding war planning was in order, and it was assumed that this should take the form of a radically revised “basic national security

policy.”

Already in February Bill Kaufmann of the RAND Social Science Department had briefed Secretary of Defense McNamara on some proposals within the Air Staff aimed at moving away from what our RAND colleague Herman Kahn labeled a “spasm” concept of general war (or as Kahn often put it, “a wargasm”) toward a capability for sustained and controlled “war fighting” even in general war, focused mainly on military targets. Kaufmann had worked with the Air Staff planners interested in this concept in preparing their briefings throughout 1960, with much help from RAND.

In the eyes of its Air Force advocates, this was a strategy aimed less at the Soviet Union than at the U.S. Navy’s Polaris program. The sub-launched missiles on Polaris submarines were smaller than those on Air Force land-based ICBMs and much smaller than those on bombers, and they were much less accurate than either, in those early days before GPS systems could determine their firing positions precisely. Thus they were less effective against hardened military targets like silo-based ICBMs (of which the Soviets had none in 1961, but were expected shortly to have hundreds to thousands). If US deterrent policy were focused only on deterrence of nuclear attack on the US, Polaris missiles, suited at that name mainly to

destroying cities but virtually invulnerable themselves to attack, looked ideal. The only role in which USAF bombers and missiles had a relative advantage was in limiting damage to the US in an all-out war by destroying Soviet land-based missiles before they were launched.

McNamara had seemed sympathetic to their approach, as virtually invulnerable to attack Kaufmann had briefed him on it.

It would have been natural then for Harry to assign Kaufmann – who was also working as an ISA consultant in Washington at this time – to draft the general war section of the new BNSP. But somewhat to my surprise, Rowen asked me to draft that section, and instead assigned Kaufmann the task of drafting a limited war section. I knew that my own views as to what the policy should be and how strategy and capabilities should change were closer to Rowen's than Kaufmann's were. I presumed that that was why I was given the job rather than Kaufmann. This encouraged me to undertake the drafting as a process of refining and making specific my own views as concretely as possible, with the expectation that the end result would probably be acceptable to Rowen. That must have been his expectation too, because the only directive he had given me was, "Write what you think the guidance should be."

That's what I proceeded to do, though in the course of it I drew on a great deal of detailed input from Kaufmann's and other RAND writings, and sought advice from RAND alumni like Alain Enthoven, Fred Hoffman, Frank Trinkl, Dave McGarvey, Malcolm Hoag and others then serving as

officials or consultants in the Department of Defense, as well as from the Air Staff officers with whom I'd been working over the past two years.

The concept of "war fighting" or "damage limiting" (limiting damage to the U.S. from Soviet offensive nuclear forces) favored by some sections of the Air Staff involved prolonged and controlled "counterforce attacks" upon a military target system in the Soviet Union and its satellites in East Europe, including precise attacks against hardened missile sites and command control centers. This concept called for increased numbers of high performance bombers, capable of penetrating Russian defenses – either flying underneath the radar or higher than the range of air defense missiles – to deliver high-yield payloads more precisely than missiles could do. Thus it gave support to the Air Force proposals for the B-70 bomber program (later called the B-1). That had everything to do with the enthusiasm of these Air Force planners for this approach.

Their boss, General Curtis LeMay was by instinct hostile to these ideas for a number of reasons. But he wanted the Air Force to have big, fast bombers that could carry a heavy payload. He was passionately devoted to the B-70 program. Lt. Colonel Bob Lukeman said to me he had heard a civilian in the Pentagon, on being told by a general officer that the first priority of the Air

Force in 1961 was to get the B-70, ask what their second priority was. He was told, "There is no second priority." The Air Force has one priority at a time, Lukeman explained to me.

[It also implied a crash effort to improve the accuracy of missiles (an objective then thought to disfavour the Navy's mobile missile, the Polaris, in favour of land-based missiles controlled by the Air Force) and meanwhile to increase numbers of missiles to make up for their inaccuracy against small and hardened military targets.]

[Second-strike damage-limiting: Andy Marshall]

The merits of counterforce attacks in limiting damage either to the target area or to the United States—on the basis of the calculations I'd seen at RAND-- did not impress me. It was obvious, then as now, that **nothing** could be relied on very much to limit damage to less than catastrophic levels once the process of general nuclear war was underway. Thus, there was an incalculably vast premium for all nuclear powers on deterring, preventing and avoiding a general nuclear war under any circumstances.

But if such a war should nevertheless commence, what seemed to me to offer relatively more promise than the Air Force's plans for "damage-limiting by controlled counterforce attacks" was a strategy aimed at **terminating** the war as quickly as possible, before all weapons on both sides had been employed, and particularly before any, many, or all had been employed against urban targets. This meant both deterring--if possible--an opponent from launching strikes against the U.S. and allied cities even if war was initiated by one side or the other, and inducing the opponent's command authority to stop operations short of expending all his weapons.

Both of these objectives called for three characteristics in our own planning and operations. First, it meant avoiding enemy cities in our own initial strikes, having announced that intention long before hostilities: rather than proclaiming beforehand and then carrying out our intent to destroy cities in all circumstances, thereby removing all restraint on enemy targeting of our cities. Second, it required maintaining protected and controlled U.S. reserve forces under virtually all circumstances, to preserve a **threat** capability in order to terminate the war (and possibly to deter enemy preparations to destroy our cities inevitably and automatically in wartime. Third, it called for preserving on **both** sides a command and control capability capable of both controlling reserve forces and terminating operations. We would need

a survivable command system capable of more than a simple “Go” decision; and we could not afford to deprive the Soviets of the same capability.

Neither I nor Harry Rowen had at that time any illusions that any such planned measures had any great likelihood of achieving the desired effects either on enemy planning or on the course of hostilities. Still, the likelihood of having some desirable effect—saving some, perhaps many cities on both sides, and ending a war once started short of mutual annihilation-- seemed greater than with the Air Staff strategizing focused exclusively on counter-force tactics. And that prospect seemed very much better (however small) compared to the current planning and posture, which did not provide for either terminating the war or significantly limiting damage (assuming large Soviet forces).

However, planning toward the three characteristics above did have a number of desirable effects on our own posture quite apart from whatever effects they might or might not have on the actual course of a general war. First, it implied that there were some choices to be made by the highest surviving U.S. authority even after general war hostilities had begun. For example, what threats to make, what terms to set for the termination of hostilities, the use of reserve forces, and the actual decision to terminate

operations. Given the nature and urgency of such decisions—which might mean life or death for our entire society--it was obviously desirable that the President himself, or at least someone having his full confidence, be physically capable of making such decisions after general war had begun. That meant preserving him or his representative physically and preserving reliable communication capabilities.

Moreover, given that the President or his representative would have to contemplate such choices during the war, there came to be a rationale for the President to inform himself *and his civilian advisors* before the war of the detailed nature of the proposed war planning. Third, and perhaps most important, once it was acknowledged that the capability of high-level authority (civilian or military) to command should be preserved during the war, and once physical measures had been taken to achieve that with high reliability, there could no longer be compelling military objections, on the basis of physical reliability, against implementing *physical* controls over nuclear weapons which would make it impossible that lower commanders could mistakenly or insubordinately initiate the use of nuclear weapons on their own.

The strategy of limiting damage by affecting the conduct of enemy

operations and by terminating the war-- and doing this by threatening the use of reserves against as-yet-undestroyed enemy targets--required plans and preparations to preserve both U.S. reserves and crucial enemy targets throughout the early stages of nuclear war, along with presidential command authority and communications. But more importantly, in my own eyes, it justified, well before hostilities, presidential involvement in the war-planning process and physical safeguards against accident and unauthorized action. Finally, by focusing critical attention upon the existing, current plans which called for the prompt destruction of Soviet and Chinese urban targets under all circumstances of general war, such a strategy opened up the possibility of a strategic and moral critique of such plans. Up until now these plans had been regarded as beyond question—especially by civilians—because supposedly there was no alternative to them for purposes of deterrence or wartime operations.

Such an approach called for drastic changes in both plans and preparations from the posture that had developed since 1953, culminating in 1960. For that reason it seemed clear that the new BNSP should be drafted in considerable concrete detail, rather than being the brief and vague document which the military had come to expect in the years when it simply reaffirmed the existing New Look doctrine. Moreover, although in principle

the BNSP directive officially defined national policy rather than arguing it, some of these notions were so unfamiliar in classified strategic dialogue that it seemed desirable to smuggle in as much rationale as possible, both to undermine resistance and to introduce the planners to considerations that had not recently appeared in military writing.

In the late afternoon of April 7, 1961, I wrote the last line of my first draft of the general war section of the BNSP, with a good deal of satisfaction. Harry had told me, "Write what you think the policy ought to be," and that was what I had done. I remember looking up at the clock on the wall in the outer office of ISA, where I was typing, and noticing that it was five p.m. For the first time that day, it occurred to me that it was my birthday. I was thirty. I remember thinking: for the rest of my life, I won't have done anything more important than this. I told Harry it was my birthday, and that I had finished a first draft. He said we should knock off (early!) and celebrate; he took me out to dinner.

Some days later I had a finished product. This took the form of a 12-page discussion of goals, contingencies and requirements, intended to make both the desired changes and the reasoning for them fully explicit to the military planners working on the JSCP and the subordinate plans.

Moreover, I drafted an earlier section of the BNSP specifying national objectives in general war. In order to avoid the previous ambiguity of the meaning of “general war,” Kaufmann and I agreed in our drafts to use the term “central war” (a RAND term) as distinguished from “local war” (instead of “limited war”). Central war was defined in my draft (later signed by McNamara) as, “war involving deliberate nuclear attacks, instituted by government authority, upon the homelands of one or both of the two major powers, the United States and the Soviet Union.” That was in the spirit of the narrow definitions of “general war” proposed by the Army and Navy in earlier disputes, rejected by the Air Force, Secretary of Defense Gates and President Eisenhower. There was no longer in our guidance a concept of “general war” defined as “armed conflict with the Soviet Union.”

“Local war” was defined in our drafts as “any other armed conflict.” The previous JSCP concept of “limited war”—as distinct from war with the Soviet Union—was discarded because we proposed to aim at limiting, if possible, even hostilities with the Soviet Union, even in central war.

Both the objectives and the draft plan itself, discussed below, would probably appear totally commonsensical to any reader unfamiliar with the

history of strategic disputes and with earlier planning or current posture.

And so they were, except for the fact that almost every sentence constituted a radical challenge to and departure from some fundamental characteristic of the then-existing plans and preparations.

Even a high civilian planner in the Defense Department – having been kept unfamiliar with the details of these plans and preparations by military bureaucratic secrecy – could have been expected to wonder why it was necessary to specify such “obvious” considerations in such explicit detail. Why bother, for example, in the highest-level policy document, to mention the need for maintaining reserve forces? The answer, remarkably, was that the highest-level war plans for the United States at that time called for the immediate expenditure of all weapons as soon as they could be made operationally ready, under all circumstances of initiation of general war (“armed conflict with the Soviet Union”). In other words, these plans, and all supporting training and preparation, not only failed to provide for the maintaining and subsequent commitment of any tactical or strategic reserves – the core consideration in classical military planning – but they positively required that there should be no meaningful reserves.

Years later, when I mentioned once to a friend that I finished my first draft of

the Top Secret guidance to planning for general nuclear war on my 30th birthday, his uncharitable reaction was: "That's frightening."

I said, "True. But you should have seen the plan I was replacing."

I expected that the initial counter-attack on the guidance from the military bureaucracy was likely to focus, disingenuously, upon the "unnecessary" specificity and the length of the document rather than upon its content .

In order to explain to the civilian officials who would be first considering this draft—none of whom, including the Secretary of Defense, would ever have seen the actual existing plans-- why guidance of such length and detail was required, as well as to justify for them the substance of the contents, I accompanied the draft with three other informal documents of my own, also top secret.

One was called, "Relation of Current Plans and Posture to Proposed Requirements," and another, "Impact of Proposed Policy on Current Planning and Operations." The third was "Short-term changes necessary to implement the plan." The first two were intended to make quite clear the discrepancies between this plan and the current posture and the need for change. The third , to counter the objection that it was infeasible, in the

space of year or two (or less) to make any accommodation to the proposed requirements.

Here is the first memo, written in April and given to Harry Rowen, Paul Nitze and Secretary McNamara accompanying my final draft of the BNSP. (It was stamped top secret, like the draft BNSP, which has been only partially declassified. My notes have not been submitted for declassification, and may or may not exist in official archives or files other than my own. Scanned versions of my original typescript of this and accompanying documents will be put on the web.)

IMPACT OF PROPOSED POLICY ON CURRENT PLANNING AND OPERATIONS

1. Eliminates SLOP as single, automatic response in Central War. Requires alternative plans.
2. Eliminates automatic inclusion of China and satellites. Requires alternative plans.
3. Calls for plans providing for withholding of some survivable forces, initial avoidance of some enemy cities, initial avoidance of governmental/military controls.
4. Calls for President and SecDef to exercise authority over strategic

planning and strategic direction: review JSCP and supporting plans, SOP's [standard operating procedures] for alert, safety, and "execute" message; and to monitor procedures.

5. Requires survivable, flexible command and control system; headed by President or as high, authoritative a figure as possible.

6. National objectives will be defined for military planning by highest civilian authorities in the detail formerly associated with time of war.

Ambiguities in guidance to be resolved not by "agreement" among the JCS, but by reference directly to the President or SecDef.

7. The enemy will to continue the war may be reduced not by destroying all major urban-industrial areas at outset, but by preserving and threatening them (and by preserving and threatening survival and control of the leaders themselves). (Note requirements.)

8. Calls for strict positive control in fact, including physical safeguards against the possibility of unauthorized use of nuclear weapons, either in local or central war.

9. Calls for plans and preparations to use conventional weapons in local conflict, up to large-scale conflict (in addition to plans using nuclears).

10. Deemphasizes nuclears for the deterrence and waging of local war (though it does not preclude their use or exclude them from deterrent

posture).

11. Rejects concept that any single, inflexible plan be adopted for use in a wide range of circumstances of central war (let alone the SLOP), or that any given set of targets are marked for immediate, automatic destruction under all conditions of Central War. (Keeps "Integrated Operational Planning", not "Single".)

12. Designation of enemy (target) nations will be by President, not JCS.

13. Rejects inevitability of Central War in war with the Soviet Union.

As I warned earlier, to an uninformed reader—i.e., nearly everyone outside the actual nuclear planning process, including the Secretary of Defense and the President—these “proposed policies”, along with the policy document they summarize and put in context, would nearly all be likely to evoke a response of “well, of course,” or “this hardly needs saying.” But a contemporary nuclear war planner would recognize each one of these propositions as a dramatically new resolution of bureaucratic controversies that had lasted years, spectacularly at odds with the current operational plans for general nuclear war.

I spelled this out in another memo for Rowen, Nitze and McNamara, telling Harry that it was a quick answer to the question, "Why is it necessary to specify all this in the BNSP: Isn't this what we're doing already?"

RELATION OF CURRENT PLANS AND POSTURE TO PROPOSED REQUIREMENTS

1) Survival and endurance

- (a) The current force cannot survive in major strength under well-coordinated enemy attack without quick reaction to tactical warning which is ambiguous and unreliable. Only the small Polaris force can endure under prolonged attack, and no current protected capability exists to control it. (Airborne alert is a current potential, and preparation could extend the interval during which planes in the air on positive control could await commitment.)
- (b) No current strategic plans provide for a strategic reserve under any circumstances of central war; all ready vehicles, including all Polaris missiles, are committed to attack pre-planned targets as soon as possible.

2) Strict positive control

- (a) There are currently no realistic procedures for the authorization of a strategic response by high national authority in the event of a surprise attack

destroying Washington. All duly constituted officials authorized to assume succession as Commander-in-Chief are normally located in Washington. Even a moderate attack on the U.S. command and control system today could eliminate, with high confidence, the possibility of a U.S. **authorized** or even coordinated response.

(b) In the absence of realistic plans or convincing assurance that authorization for an appropriate response will be forthcoming, there is widespread acceptance of the notion that unauthorized "initiative" will be necessary, either at high military levels of command (which are almost as vulnerable as Washington) or at low. Both this attitude itself, and the reluctance to institute reliable safeguards against authorized action which follows from it, increase the possibility of unauthorized "initiative" in a time of crisis, under the stress of ambiguous indications and an outage of communications with higher command.

(c) Although there are physical safeguards against accident there are almost none against unauthorized action, either in connection with individual vehicles or in command post operations. Such safeguards are technically possible; in principle, they take the form of a combination lock on weapons, requiring a code sent by higher authority to unsafe or release the weapon.

(d) Such safeguards are particularly important in connection with weapons under dual control with an Ally; current "protection" furnished by the Ally itself, serves to guard against "third party" action but furnishes minimum inhibition against unilateral action by Allied forces themselves.

(e) "Super-safing" both against accident and unauthorized action is required for weapons on high alert or mobile. Currently, weapons on high alert with Allied forces, nominally under dual control, not only lack such special precautions but are atypically accident-prone, not having been designed for such operations.

(f) It would be unacceptable to lower the risk of accident at the cost of markedly raising the risk of deliberate enemy attack; solutions to the problems of accident and unauthorized action should not afford an enemy the opportunity to paralyze the U.S. response totally by attack on the command and control system. Although the design of explicit procedures for authorization under all circumstances raises complicated issues, such procedures could be both safer and more reliable than current tacit, ambiguous and uncontrolled understandings.

3. Information

(a) Current plans (prior to the President's Budget Message) do not call for bomb alarm read-outs at offensive force bases or subordinate command

posts. Many units, particularly outside the ZI, might have outage of communications as their only immediate indication of enemy attack, and that would be highly ambiguous.

(b) The current design of the bomb alarm system, including means of transmission of signals, is such that a small number of bombs might put it out of operation. Thus, even though it had indicated that an attack involving "at least," say, four bombs had taken place, it would not be able to indicate even grossly the actual size of the attack, its nature (e.g., whether or not cities were being hit on a large scale), or its gross effects on U.S. bases; nor could it discriminate reliably between a large-scale, coordinated attack and an attack involving a few weapons, possibly as a result of unauthorized action or *n*th country action.

(c) Almost all information, status-reporting, intelligence, sensor and reconnaissance systems are either totally unprotected or vulnerable in vital links; inputs of data to surviving decision-makers would drop almost to zero at the outset of a major attack.

(d) The bomb alarm system as currently planned does not link different levels in the chain of command. No other highly reliable means of determining the status of higher command are currently provided~ reliance is upon outage of communications, which is highly ambiguous.

4. Force flexibility.

- (a) Current design of Minuteman missiles makes it impossible to fire fewer than 50 at a time.
- (b) Current design of Minuteman missiles requires procedures which may take six hours to change the target of a missile from the one preset. If commitment within a few minutes or hours is required, the currently planned Minuteman force could be used only in blocs of 50 against preplanned targets.
- (c) Current plans do not include options for covering alternative target systems; in the absence of such plans, rapid retargeting of large numbers of bombers is almost impossible, even before attack. No protected facilities, or planning aids for rapid replanning, would allow such retargeting after attack.
- (d) The almost total current lack of preparation and capability for post-attack reconnaissance, would severely limit the possibility, after initial attacks, of continued countermilitary action, even against soft, fixed missiles relying only on concealment for protection.

5. Counter-military capability

- (a) Lacking flexibility and the capability for rapid re-planning just prior to or during attack, current counter-military forces would have little ability to exploit actual inefficiencies or vulnerabilities in Soviet posture or tactics; in

any case, they lack the protected information sources necessary to recognize such Soviet departures from conservative U.S. expectations.

(b) Even if U.S. counter-military action were able markedly to reduce the weight of attack that the Soviets could launch against the U.S., other aspects of U.S. posture combine to ensure that even a small Soviet attack would be maximally potent;

1) The basing of U.S. bombers, missiles, carriers and Polaris submarines near major U.S. or Allied cities currently makes those cities "bonus" targets in a Soviet attack on U.S. forces. But the current plans for siting missiles near or upwind of U.S. cities gratuitously adds to this problem. They decrease the force requirements by a deliberate enemy attack against both forces and U.S. population, and they increase the inadvertent destruction from an attack on U.S. forces alone.

2) Anti-bomber defenses current operate in highly vulnerable, centralized modes, and the defensive vehicles themselves are unprotected. The possible effectiveness of anti-missile defenses is still under question.

3) The current lack of adequate fallout protection in the U.S. means that even a very small attack--a large unauthorized Soviet action, an attack by a minor power, an aborted attack or one heavily attrited by U.S. counter-military action--would cause very heavy U.S. casualties, even if the attack

hit no major U.S. cities directly. Thus, measures proposed to reduce the likelihood of a large enemy attack, and especially a large attack against cities, could not lower U.S. casualties below an extremely large figure even under a relatively small attack.

6. Contingency planning.

a) Current "alternative options" provide only for differing force size and coordination of attack upon a single, given target system, corresponding to different intervals of warning. Even in the attack on this system, they do not provide for different patterns of U.S. base destruction in a surprise attack .

They do not allow attack of alternative target systems, or deliberate postponement of attack on any part of the given target system.

(b) No current option provides for the avoidance or postponement of attack on major Soviet or Communist Chinese cities.

(c) No current option provides for minimizing non-military casualties in the U.S.S.R. or Communist China subject to the military requirements of strictly counterforce operations.

(d) No current option provides for the maintenance of ready forces (e.g., Polaris submarines) in strategic reserve.

(e) No current option provides for the exclusion of primary governmental control centers, or primary military control centers, from initial attack.

- (f) No current option covers war with the Soviet Union alone, excluding or postponing attacks upon Communist China.
- (g) The exclusion of one or more satellite nations from planned attacks would require procedures taking several hours to complete.
- (h) Neither joint strategic plans, nor supporting plans, have normally been submitted to the President or to the Secretary of Defense for their inspection, review or approval, although nominally all directives to the unified and specified commanders are issued by authority and direction of the Secretary of Defense or the Commander-in-Chief.

7. Protected command

- (a) See 2 (a)
- (b) A single bomb on Washington would seriously degrade military command capability, but it would virtually eliminate all constituted political authority and all experienced, fully informed political leadership. Such an explosion might be the result of accident, unauthorized action, *n*th- country action, or badly executed or abortive enemy attack: all events putting the utmost premium on information, experience and authority both political and military.
- (c) The possibility of precluding authorization of a response, and thereby possibly paralyzing or at least delaying a coordinated U.S. response, by

hitting a few soft or semi-soft command posts

in the U.S. makes those centers overwhelmingly attractive targets.

If the cost of destroying U.S. primary command centers could be sharply raised, and the rewards to hitting them sharply lowered or even made negative (by assuring a maximal retaliatory response), the enemy would be forced, at the least, to reconsider the desirability of attacking them.

(d) Before 1961, plans for protection of primary leadership depended almost entirely on warning and relocation; yet the alternate relocation sites offer highly inadequate protection. There was, in effect, "no place to hide," even with warning. (Current plans for mobile sites should improve this situation).

8. Wartime control

(a) See 6a-g

(b) Once an authenticated "Execute" order has been received by SAC forces: SAC operational doctrine--and their lack of an authentication code for a "Stop" order--prevents them from being stopped by any authority.

(c) Since all current strategic options destroy all major Sino-Soviet urban-industrial centers and governmental/military control centers, and none maintains a strategic reserve, U.S. national policy maintains no plausible basis for inducing any Soviet commanders or units to terminate operations

prior to expending all their weapons upon U.S. and Allied cities. It does not even allow them the physical command and control capability to do so.

My draft of the Central War section of the BNSP has not been declassified in full. However, what has been released (to the National Security Archive, on FOIA request) is a redacted, “sanitized copy, sensitive information deleted” copy declassified April 12, 1996, of a Top Secret message sent from the JCS to the unified and specified commanders¹ of “a draft section of proposed new Basic National Security Policy [my draft, word for word] prepared in the Office of the Secretary of Defense.” The message states, “This Policy has not been approved. Request replies in response to requirements outlined in Part I be submitted to Joint Chiefs of Staff not later than 6 June.”

What follows is my own copy of the guidance, which is identical to that in the message except that it includes the portions redacted from the JCS cable, which are represented in the document released by large black blocs (in one case, two and a half pages). [See Figs. X and Y.] I show these passages in bold type, surrounded by {}, to indicate what the Office of Secretary of Defense regarded as still requiring Top Secret classification in

¹ JCS 995685, May 9, 1961, Top Secret (Exempted from automatic downgrading), JCS Exclusive Distribution, to Director of Strategic Target Planning (Offutt Air Force Base, Nebraska), CINCAL, CINCLANT, UNSCINCEUR, CINCPAC, CINCNELM and CINCSAC. Director of Joint Staff sends Personal for General Power, General Armstrong, Admiral Dennison, General Norstad, Admiral Felt and Admiral Smith. See www.-----.

1996, thirty-five years after they were written. Most of these passages were finally released on appeal by the National Security Archive three years later, though one passage, oddly, remains blacked out (shown below in bold italics). The judgment of the censors in the Office of Secretary of Defense in 1996 and 1999 is somewhat inscrutable, but conjectures on their concerns are possible, and of some interest (discussed later).

“Section F. Policy for Central War Posture and Strategy Goals [Section E, preceding this in the JCS message, was my listing of Major National Security Objectives, omitted here.]

The primary objectives of U. S. policy with respect to central war must be to deter deliberate attack and prevent unintended outbreak. The U.S. rejects armed aggression as a means of enhancing its security; nor can major thermonuclear war be its preferred instrument in meeting armed aggression by others. It is an object of U. S. policy that there be adequate alternatives to the initiation by the U. S. of central war. Yet if central war is forced upon the United States, U. S. military strength must still serve multiple national objectives.

Central war can result from a variety of causes other than the calculated and objective view of enemy leaders that they can achieve

decisive superiority over the U. S. by deliberate surprise attack. National planning cannot safely be based on the assumption that deterrence will certainly succeed, that unpremeditated nuclear attacks cannot occur, or that major aggression, undeterred, will never challenge the U. S. to fulfill its commitments to Allies and to protect its security by risking or waging central war. Neither can it regard all possible outcomes of a central war as indistinguishable. In some circumstances, even the best outcome attainable in central war may represent unprecedented catastrophe; yet outcomes very significantly worse than the best, both in civil and military aspects, may also be possible, and it will remain an urgent goal of U. S. security policy to forestall them.

Thus, central war posture and strategy must continuously be tested not only for ability to prevent deliberate or undeliberated attack but for ability to secure basic national objectives in wartime. Solutions to these separate problems can and should be chosen to reinforce each other.

The most urgent military goal in central war is to preclude the prospect of an unarmed U. S. confronting armed opponents. It is essential that no enemy be able to disarm the U. S. by surprise attack on forces or controls; **{it is equally important that the U. S. not disarm itself, by expending all ready forces in initial attacks that cannot guarantee to**

disarm the opponent. Although the Soviet Union must be left in no doubt that its military strength would be drastically reduced in any central war, there may be future circumstances in which U. S. counter-military action alone could not disarm it totally in initial attack; the Soviets might be able to retain sizeable forces that were initially untargetable or that could be destroyed only at a highly unfavorable rate of exchange in terms of residual capability. To the extent that conservative planning must allow for the survival of such Soviet forces, U. S. posture and strategy must permit the retention of ready and uncommitted forces in reserve, at least comparable to estimated Soviet residual forces in ability to inflict further damage or to influence further the military balance. These forces must remain, under all circumstances of enemy attack, under effective control by authorized political leadership.}

A visible and indisputable capability to achieve this basic military requirement is vital to deter deliberate attack on the US. It denies such an attack any incentive. It guarantees that even a well-designed surprise attack would be futile and costly; an assault could neither win military superiority nor reduce to acceptable proportions the nuclear retaliation that could be launched by U. S. forces.

At the same time, the capabilities required for this fundamental task serve the other wartime goals of minimizing damage to the U. S. and its Allies and forcing a conclusion to the war on advantageous terms. U. S. counter-military action reduces enemy capability to inflict further damage or to continue the war; the **{survival of sizeable U. S. ready residual forces, threatening, by their very existence, enemy targets surviving or deliberately left un-hit in initial attacks, can destroy the will of surviving enemy leaders to pursue unrestricted attacks or to continue the war.**

The latter ability to influence enemy will might be particularly vital in circumstances when attacks upon enemy capabilities alone could not deprive enemy forces of a residual ability to inflict grave damage. Under those same circumstances, it might appear probable that attacks against high governmental and military command centers, or indiscriminate initial attacks on all major urban-industrial centers would fail to inhibit punitive retaliation by surviving enemy units, but would instead eliminate the possibility that enemy response could be controlled or terminated to U. S. advantage.

The ability of U. S. ready forces held in reserve to extent deterrence, in some degree, into the wartime period, can have important effect not only upon the later stages of hostilities but upon the damage

deliberately inflicted by the enemy' s initial assault. Whether the enemy attack were premeditated, irrational, or based on false alarm, initial enemy tactics will reflect his pre-attack planning, which in turn reflects his image of U. S. capabilities and options. The prospect of confronting sizeable, protected and controlled U. S. reserve forces after any attack should deter him from planning unrestricted attacks on U. S. or Allied society under any circumstances; it should further induce him to undertake preparations for post-attack flexibility, control, and information. It thus lays the groundwork, if war should occur, for deterring unrestricted enemy attacks and for deterring continuance of hostilities.}

Not all objectives can be achieved with equal confidence. But a capability to preclude, with high confidence, enemy residual military superiority at any stage of the conflict offers best hope not only of deterring deliberate attack but, if war occurs, of minimizing damage to the U. S. and its Allies and of stopping the war on the most advantageous terms possible.

At the same time, the posture and strategy for deterring or waging central war must be consistent with efforts to minimize the likelihood of accidents, unauthorized actions or unintended nuclear exchanges, to reduce the spread of nuclear weapons, to deter or defeat local aggression, and to

enhance U. S. security by safeguarded arms control agreements and by non-military means.

Contingencies

Posture and strategy for central war must be designed to achieve these various U. S. security objectives under a spectrum of contingencies. It must be intended to deter not only a conservative decision-maker in the absence of national or international tension, but a wishful or frightened opponent in a time of crisis, when his alternatives to attack upon the U. S. might also seem dangerous to him. Its ability to deter must be able to withstand sizeable enemy miscalculation of U. S. intentions or capabilities, and should offer hope of withstanding unforeseen technological shifts. Its ability to prevent or to contain the political and military consequences of accidents, unauthorized actions, false alarms or "third party" actions must be considered for varied situations of international tension and local war, when such incidents are both more likely and more dangerous than in periods of relative calm.

If central war should occur, despite U. S. efforts to reduce its likelihood, there could be wide variance in the circumstances of initiation, enemy posture and readiness, enemy tactics, the results of initial attacks, the attitudes and actions of Allies on both sides, and enemy wartime objectives.

Ability to achieve U. S. wartime objectives would depend upon ability to adapt U. S. strategic response to these various circumstances, which might be unforeseen, ambiguous, or both. A single detonation or several might presage a major assault, or come by accident, unauthorized action to attack by a minor power. A surprise attack might be calculated and well-designed or a hasty response to false tactical warning or miscalculation of U. S. intentions. It might be well or poorly executed, providing much warning or none; retaining sizeable, protected enemy reserves or few; destroying all but the most protected U. S. forces or failing to do so.

It might direct heavy initial assault against U.S. and Allied civil society and major command centers or it might carefully avoid such targets. Central war might culminate an escalating local war, preceded by mobilization, deployment and heightened alert on both sides; or an attack might follow a period of normal alert. Enemy posture and readiness might lack major vulnerability, assuring the survival under counterforce attack of major mobile, concealed or hardened enemy forces; or the enemy may have failed to protect parts of his system effectively.

This list of possibilities is not exhaustive. Intermediate situations between the extremes cited may offer special problems; and "surprises" in the form of wholly unforeseen circumstances are likely.

Among all these contingencies, it is not exclusively the "worst" cases or even the most likely ones that deserve attention; the design of posture and strategy should provide insurance against a broad range of uncertain possibilities. It is necessary to be able to exploit even improbably favorable wartime possibilities, such as windfalls of intelligence or warning, badly executed enemy attack, or urgent desire of leaders of one or more enemy nations to surrender after early operation. A capability for flexible response under high-level, informed and experienced political leadership may be most critical, and most rewarding, in such favorable cases, or in the ambiguous and urgent circumstances presented by accident, unauthorized action, "third party" attack, enemy false alarm or escalation of local war. It is in these situations that the need for a range of options to an all-out, indiscriminating strategic response may be most urgent; important capabilities would include a series of well-designed alerting actions and defensive measures, communication with Allies and potential enemies, augmentation of intelligence and warning systems, and implementation of threats and discriminating counterforce attacks.

Requirements

To satisfy these demands, military posture for central war should acquire, as soon as possible and to the extent practicable, the following characteristics:

1. Survival and endurance. Strategic offensive forces, in major strength, should be capable of surviving an enemy surprise attack without essential reliance upon quick reaction to warning. A sizeable fraction of such forces should be capable of enduring in a wartime environment under prolonged re-attack, as a ready reserve force responsive to flexible, centralized control.

{2. Strict positive control. Control over the initiation and overall conduct of nuclear war should be exercised at all times by highest national authority. The President will determine and review procedures for each control, including any delegation of basic decisions under any circumstances of Presidential inability to control. There should be reliable physical safeguards against accident or unauthorized action involving nuclear weapons, including weapons under dual control with an Ally; in particular, weapons on high alert status, in mobile launches, and in planes launched under positive control. Authorized procedures and protected control capabilities should assure an opponent of an effective, properly authorized response under all circumstances of attack, without any reliance upon the possibility of unauthorized initiative.}

3. Information. Reliable, unequivocal bomb alarm detectors and bomb alarm signals at key warning, communications and command points and all major offensive force bases, and detectors at all major cities, should be provided to assure any opponent that dependable notification of any surprise attack cannot be eliminated. Such a system should be protected under attack to a degree which will enable it to provide at least gross indications of the size and nature of enemy attack, the status of U. S. bases and the level of damage to U. S. society. So far as practicable, reliable information, status-reporting, intelligence, sensor, and reconnaissance systems, including protected post-attack capabilities, should be provided to furnish more discriminating knowledge of the source and nature of attack, U.S. and enemy residual capability, and damage to U. S., Allied, and enemy societies. Means should be provided for prompt, reliable and unequivocal indication of the status of higher command centers to all units, permitting orderly devolution of command in accordance with authorized procedures.

{4. Force flexibility. Strategic offensive forces, both missiles and aircraft, should be capable of *selective commitment against alternative targets, with capability for rapid retargeting after attack. Forces held in ready reserve should have capability for continued counter-military action, as well as retaliatory attacks against non-military targets.*}

5. Counter-military capability. Offensive counterforce capabilities, active defenses and passive defenses, supported by warning and reconnaissance systems, should be able to reduce enemy residual military capability at least to levels that will ensure the strategic advantage of U. S. residual forces; they should be equipped to exploit possible vulnerabilities in Soviet posture or gross inefficiencies in Soviet planning or execution of attacks. These measures should be complemented by (a) geographic separation of U. S. strategic forces from population centers to the fullest extent consistent with other military objectives; (b) such active anti-bomber and anti-missile defenses of cities as are judged to be effective; (c) civil defense which, at a minimum, provides adequate fallout protection and recovery capability from nuclear attack directed at important U. S. military strengths.

6. Contingency planning. To permit rapid selective responses on the basis of information available at the outset of hostilities and after, contingency plans should be provided corresponding to gross differences in the circumstances and course of central war. **{In particular, alternative options should include counterforce operations carefully avoiding major enemy cities while retaining U. S. ready residual forces to threaten these targets; the option to exclude major control centers from counterforce**

attacks **should** also be available under all circumstances. Alternative plans covering central war with the USSR will provide both for the inclusion and exclusion of Communist China and other individual members of the Sino-Soviet Bloc in initial attacks, the choice to be designated by the President or highest surviving national authority at the time of hostilities. So far as consistent with military objectives: (a) all plans for military action against Bloc members other than the USSR and Communist China should minimize fallout and non-military damage and casualties; (b) all planned attacks against designated enemy nations should be designed to minimize resulting damage and casualties in all other nations, in particular neutrals and Allies of the U. S. Management, decision and planning aids should be provided to permit rapid re-planning prior to, and, as practicable, during hostilities. While avoiding premature decisions or commitments, guidelines should be formulated and kept under review specifying acceptable terms for ending hostilities, suitable to the several circumstances under which central war might commence and proceed; those terms should provide for the satisfaction of U. S. security objectives in such circumstances, without a predetermined requirement for unconditional enemy

surrender. The President and the Secretary of Defense will review all strategic plans.

7. Protected Command. The protected command, communications and information systems should permit coordinated, informed and selective overall direction of U. S. forces by the highest surviving, authorized civilian and military leaders; to the utmost extent feasible, selection should be by highest constituted political authorities at all times. In particular, these systems should be designed and protected to minimize the loss of command capability and political leadership that could result from a small number of detonations, stemming from accident, unauthorized action, attack by a minor power, badly executed attack or attack intended to avoid U. S. command capabilities. By means of mobility, hardening, active defense, dispersal, inter-netting, or concealment, the protection of primary command facilities and communications serving highest national leadership should aim to raise the cost to the enemy of destroying primary centers to a level which would deter him from planning to attack them, given his inability – which must be assured with the highest confidence – to paralyze U. S. response by doing so. Plans for protection of primary command capabilities and leadership should not rely upon warning, but

should be prepared to utilize available warning, either strategic or tactical.

8. Wartime control. The protected command and communications system should enable highest surviving national leaders to exploit, in pursuit of national objectives, the full capability for selective, deliberate, response provided by force flexibility and endurance, information, and counter-military capability. It should enable them to use surviving forces efficiently, to make significant choices as to overall target objectives, scope and timing of attacks, and to modify these choices during hostilities on the basis of new information. It should allow commanders not only to select preplanned responses but to modify them or, within limits, to improvise new ones. It should support their efforts to end hostilities on the most advantageous possible terms. It must provide highly reliable means for transmitting authenticated "Stop" or "Recall" orders to offensive forces in addition to initial "Go" orders. National leaders should have swift, reliable means of communications with Allied and enemy leaders prior to and during hostilities. Plans and preparations should be made to enable U. S. national leaders effectively to threaten use of U. S. reserve forces against civil or military targets as yet un-hit; to carry out

demonstrations; to provide evidence of remaining capabilities or to mislead the enemy by cover and deception activities; to propose terms acceptable to the U. S. for ending hostilities, safeguarding U. S. security interests in the light of circumstances of war initiation, the conduct of the war and the results of initial operations; and to monitor and enforce conformity to agreed terms.}

A U. S. military posture with these broad capabilities permits a wide variety of strategic responses under varying conditions of central war. Its major post-attack capabilities should effectively deter deliberate attack; yet if central war occurs, they give highest national authority maximum opportunity to preserve U. S. military advantage, to limit damage to the U. S. and its Allies and to stop the war on the most advantageous possible terms. They will allow U. S. commanders to exploit any opportunity in wartime to disarm the opponent or to achieve decisive military superiority in support of U. S. postwar aims, if circumstances offer hope of doing so without grave jeopardy to other national goals. If an aggressor should initiate central war, these capabilities will assure him of a decisive degradation in his relative military power position and of unprecedented damage to his society (even with a counter-military U. S. response); they will assure him of still greater damage and further worsening

of his military position if he should continue the conflict. They would warn him that direct attack upon U. S. and Allied civil society would be, under any circumstances, the worst of all possible actions.

Moreover, this posture will reduce the likelihood of unpremeditated nuclear exchanges. The protected command system, safeguarded positive control, and ability to achieve essential goals by deliberate response, without reliance upon hasty reaction under ambiguous circumstances, should reduce both the chance and enemy fear of U. S. accident, unauthorized action or false alarm. At the same time, the U. S. posture reduces the tendency of any opponent to attack hastily under similarly ambiguous circumstances, since the prospect of U. S. post-attack capabilities deprives him of incentive to do so.

In comparison to current posture, the most urgent changes demanded involve principally qualitative characteristics of force capabilities rather than major increase in force size. These characteristics complement each other; but they are important individually. Progress toward achieving major security objectives does not demand that they all be attained simultaneously. In particular, all opportunities to improve the ability of constituted leaders to control the forces in a deliberate, discriminating

fashion, and to enlarge the range of alternative options available to them, should be exploited on an immediate and continuing basis.”

[end of draft portion: eventually issued, without change, to the JCS as SecDef Guidance on Planning for General War.]

The final memo I sent to Rowen, Nitze, McNamara and Gilpatric to accompany my draft BNSP section was headed, “Some Possibilities for Short-run Improvements in Current Posture/Planning.” I told Harry Rowen, in a cover sheet, that it was a quick answer to the question, “Given that we’re doing none of these things today, is it possible to make any changes before 1965; and is it necessary to buy the whole program, with embellishments, before any significant improvement is achieved?”

Separately, I urged Harry to warn McNamara and Gilpatric about the JCS tendency to take the position that nothing could be done in the short run, that changes in the direction of the draft BNSP would have to wait a year or even years in the future. At the same time, I suggested that the Joint Staff be warned to resist giving McNamara the “idiot treatment” in their response. They could be told that McNamara “has seen the JSCP” (not true—see account below—but it was true that someone advising him had studied it,

namely me) and he knew how little flexibility it offered. He was determined to get what changes he could, soon if possible; he would not be satisfied with the claim that no immediate improvements could be made, especially considering the changes that were already underway (Polaris, bomb alarm systems, mobile command posts). In any case, they should know that if McNamara were to be stuck with one single “best all-purpose option” for operational reasons, it wouldn’t be the current SIOP-62. That had to be changed, immediately.

To these ends, I listed the following possibilities for short-run change:

[NOTE: this list may be moved to the web, with a footnote, and merely excerpted or paraphrased here. Parts that may be worth retaining in the text are indicated below by underlining. I have omitted two final paragraphs on longer-term moves.]

“1. As Polaris submarines are added to the force, they become available as a potential strategic reserve of long endurance. Airborne alert, if directed, would increase the force capable of surviving no-warning attack; short-term measures could increase the flexibility of this force, including:

(a) planning and briefing for alternative target systems;

(b) communications improvements and other preparations to extend the interval during which planes in the air could await commitment or could be retargeted or recalled.

2. Currently-planned mobile, back-up command centers can greatly improve the possibility of an authorized response under all circumstances of enemy attack. At the least, they should very sharply reduce enemy hope or confidence of paralyzing U. S. response by attacks on primary command centers. They even furnish some low-confidence "protection" to primary command centers by lessening or eliminating enemy incentives for hitting primary command. Highly reliable means of communication of "execute" messages to all forces are also relatively short-term possibilities.

3. Given the planned improvement above, immediate measures might be taken throughout all commands to emphasize that there will be no reliance upon unauthorized "initiative" under any circumstances. Physical safeguards against unauthorized action -- such as a "lock" device on weapons, if that proves feasible and desirable -- and safeguarded command post procedures governing the authentication and issuance of "execute" messages could be implemented. Weapons inherently difficult to safeguard from accident or unauthorized action while on high alert status could be immediately removed from such status.

4. Planned bomb-alarm readouts at bases and command posts will give further assurance to an enemy that he cannot paralyze U. S. response.

System design could be altered to provide more reliable indication of base status and of the size and pattern of enemy attack (e.g., whether some or all cities are being avoided), if it proves feasible to protect the system against larger attack than is now planned. The bomb-alarm system could be extended world-wide. This system alone could provide sufficient information, though in a gross form, for some significant choices by surviving commanders, e.g., in mobile command posts (although it would be highly desirable to have broader, more reliable and more discriminating information as well).

5. Plans for Minuteman missile system design could be changed to allow selective firing of individual missiles, and varying degrees of flexibility in retargeting individual missiles. The time interval during which commitment could be delayed or retargeting accomplished (currently, six hours from attack on system) could be extended.

6. Current plans for siting new missiles near or upwind of major cities could be altered.

7. Alternative options could be provided covering significantly different target systems, use of reserves, and timing of attack. For certain of these,

different sub-options could be planned corresponding to different patterns of base-destruction resulting from no-warning or low-warning enemy attack.

8. Specifically, options might provide for the exclusion of Communist China, or of individual Satellite nations, from attack. Options might provide for the exclusion of urban-industrial centers, or governmental control centers from direct attack, and for the minimization of non-military casualties from remaining attacks. Sub-options might allow for the exclusion of primary military controls, to the extent that this is compatible with attack upon Soviet bases and sites.

9. Provision could be made for maintaining experienced political authorities and staff outside of Washington at all times, with adequate communications and information inputs. At the least, this could minimize the loss of immediate political direction in the event of a single bomb or small attack involving Washington.

10. Preparations could be made to reduce sharply the vulnerability of the highest national authorities, including the President, in the event of warning, by transfer to mobile or concealed sites.

11. Preparations could be made increasing the possibility of swift, reliable communications with Allied and enemy leaders prior to and during attack.

12. SAC operational doctrine and procedures could be modified to permit halting further attacks at any time that communications permit.

“This list is not at all exhaustive, but includes changes that do not seem to involve relatively large amounts of both time and money; most of them involve changes in planning or procedures for operation of capabilities already existing or planned. These measures alone would promise to reduce the possibility of accident or unauthorized action, improve deterrence of attack (by assuring effective response) and deterrence of attack on command centers, and give surviving leadership increased freedom of action, including the option to minimize enemy and Allied damage consistent with the achievement of U. S. national objectives, and to use threats of reserve forces against un-hit targets to discourage the enemy from attacking U. S. cities or from continuing the war. They do not happen to imply increases in force size; nor do the improvements achieved depend on any superiority in force size to Soviet forces.”

On the basis of these memos, and specifically the last one, I got word from McNamara's office that I should draft a memo for McNamara to send to the JCS directing CINCSAC, as Director of Strategic Target Planning, to

explore and make concrete recommendations for introducing command flexibility and alternative options to the war plans in the relatively short run. When I showed my first draft ² to Colonel Lukeman on the Joint Staff, he warned me that it wasn't tactful enough to get a helpful response from General Power. In particular, he would be offended by the implication that there weren't any real alternatives in the current plan. They had, after all, what they called "options" in the plan (though they all involved attack by all ready forces—and eventually all forces, with none in reserve—against the same target list.) He edited my draft to make it less provocative to SAC, posing "questions," and adding a sentence beginning, "Recognizing that these plans already permit a variety of options keyed to duration of warning, geographic discretion, constraints, and specifics of weather and visibility..."

The final version, redrafted for Deputy Secretary Gilpatric's signature, was sent to the Chairman, Joint Chiefs of Staff on May 5, 1961, with the heading "Policy Guidance on Plans for Central War," along with my draft portion of the proposed BNSP, all marked Top Secret. The Director of the Joint Staff

² For scanned copies of my original drafts of this message, and of the BNSP and my memos relating to my draft BNSP, see www.-----. Complete versions of these, including redacted portions, are from my own copies.

forwarded both of these memos, as Parts I and II respectively of a May 9 cable to the unified and specified commanders, for their comments.

As in the case of Part II quoted earlier, I present the Gilpatric memorandum as quoted in the JCS cable (which was partly declassified in 1996) for the interest of indicating--by bold type--the section that was redacted then by the Office of the Secretary of Defense as still deserving Top Secret classification thirty-five years later.

“Part I.

2. Our plans and programs should provide a significant range of alternative response options appropriate to the various foreseeable forms of a thermonuclear war emergency. The ability of the president to select a response suited to the specific circumstances prevailing at the time of hostilities should enhance deterrence and could permit the United States and its Allies, if central war occurred, to secure military, civil and political outcomes markedly more advantageous than might otherwise be expected.
3. The attached draft of a section of the proposed new Basic National Security Policy reflects current thinking on the goals, criteria, and the nature

of required capabilities for a posture permitting controlled, discriminating response . To the degree made feasible by progress toward the requisite capabilities, it should be possible concurrently to reflect in basic policies and war plans provisions for increased latitude in response options to thermonuclear war emergency. Such recent or currently programmed innovations as integrated operational planning for strategic offensive forces, mobile alternate command posts at national level and below, the extension of the bomb alarm system and the introduction of the Polaris system all lend themselves to immediate exploitation in the interests of greater strategic flexibility. We should be interested, therefore, not only in the long-run improvements of posture in this direction, but in pursuing opportunities for partial and progressive development on a continuous basis, beginning as soon as possible.

4. The Joint Chiefs of Staff are requested to cause the Director of Strategic Target Planning to scrutinize the current SIOP-62 and forces committed to its execution and that appropriate unified and specified commanders similarly scrutinize their current war plans covering atomic capable offensive forces not committed to the SIOP. Recognizing that their plans already permit a variety of options keyed to duration of warning, geographic

discretion, constraints, and specifics of weather and visibility, the objective of this scrutiny will be to provide answers to the following questions:

- a. In light of considerations in the attached paper and of such new capabilities as those mentioned above, to what specific extent might it be feasible in the near term to provide a wider latitude of options for response to thermonuclear war emergency, assuming that any impediments to this action embodied in the current National Strategic Targeting and Attack Policy were removed?
- b. What would be a realistic time schedule for the earliest integration of such feasible additions to current response options into operational plans?
- c. If further desirable options would depend on capabilities not current programmed, would changes in our capabilities be feasible at reasonable cost and effort in the near term, and what specific actions would be necessary?
- d. What capabilities not presently programmed would be the principal requirements for a future posture permitting a still wider variety of response options calculated to derive maximum advantage from any of the foreseeable circumstances under which central war might occur?

- e. Are there any other major problems or difficulties foreseen, in light of the recognized necessity to avoid any disruption or reduction of current capabilities?

5. Mr. McNamara and I are particularly interested in assessment of the possibilities for early development of options relieving selected elements of ready forces from initial attack assignments to permit their retention as uncommitted ready reserves; options permitting avoidance of attacks against enemy urban-industrial, population and governmental control centers as such in initial attacks; options permitting exclusion from initial attack, to the extent feasible, of one or more member nations of the Sino-Soviet Bloc without the necessity for replanning the balance of the attack; options providing varying degrees of adjustment in force posture, beyond those currently planned, during periods of critical tension; options permitting attacks against ready military strengths while minimizing “bonus” damage to non-military population and resources.

If possible, the Director of Strategic Target Planning should respond to this inquiry by 15 June 1961.